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difficult piece, the "Esmeralda Fantasia," by Antonio Bazzini, the celebrated Italian violinist, who is still living and well known in Germany, and who, like Sivori, is one of the most renowned virtuosos of modern times.

After this performance, and others I heard during my visit, it struck me as evident that the practical cultivation of orchestral playing—according to the Italian standard—is zealously and successfully carried out, and I was able to compliment Sig. Pinto sincerely on the fact. As to how it fares with pianoforte playing and the vocal art, I could not, on account of the limited time at my disposal, satisfy myself. But if I might express an opinion on the pianoforte playing I had previously heard in Italy, it would, with some exceptions, not be, as a rule, very favorable. Then, however, the piano, on account of its poverty of tone and eminently ideal character, is no instrument for a nation that seeks and finds the greatest charm of musical enjoyment in sensually beautiful but, so to speak, tonally elementary melody.

That, on the other hand, since Verdi gave his compositions to the world, vocal art has visibly fallen off in Italy needs no longer any corroboration. As I was about leaving, I found an opportunity which I had greatly desired of making the personal acquaintance of the Maestro Saverio Mercadante, whose opera, *La Vistale*, I had heard in Rome. The grey-haired artist, who is nearly seventy years of age, and who, three years ago, had the misfortune to become totally blind, was delivering an address to a large number of the pupils, attended by some of the professors. He is a man of small, spare stature. His head was covered with a little velvet cap. He was sitting in a dignified attitude upon a sofa, while those present respectfully formed a semi-circle round him. He spoke in a clear and sharply accentuated voice, his words being enforced by animated gestures. Sig. Pinto seized a fitting opportunity to introduce me. The sprightly old gentleman immediately broke off his address, and entered with me into conversation, in which, with almost diplomatic dexterity, he gave utterance to some well turned remarks on German music and musicians. He ended by courteously charging my conductor to see that I carried away with me a favorable impression of the institution committed to his care.

The Neapolitans have no little reason for being, to a certain extent, proud of this Conservatory; for not only is it the oldest of its kind in Europe, but many celebrated artists, including some masters of the first rank, received their professional education there. Among them I will mention only the following:—Scaratti (the operatic composer) whose Christian name was Alessandro; Feo, Leo, Durante, Monteverde, Pergolese, Paisiello, Cimarosa, Spontini, and many more. The library, kept in admirable order by Sig. Florimo, contains a most valuable collection of manuscripts of the above mentioned, and other pupils more or less celebrated, of the Conservatory. Among the autograph MSS., I observed two operas by Feo; eleven operas by Leo; some sacred compositions by Durante; six operas by Alessandro Scarlatti, and several works by Pergolese.

Sig. Florimo informed me that he is at present engaged in writing a copious history of the Naples Conservatory. It will no doubt contain some important contributions to the history of music, and, in consequence, its publication must be expected with interest.

VON WASIELEWSKI.

#### THE SONS OF THE CLERGY.

The 213th anniversary of the festival of the "Sons of the Clergy" was celebrated on Wednesday afternoon by a full choral service under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. We need hardly say that this ancient and admirable corporation was instituted for the purpose of assisting necessitous clergymen, pensioning their widows and aged single daughters, educating, apprenticing, and providing outfits for their children.

The actual President is the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Vice-President, Lord Cranworth. The following extract from the printed programme of the day will suffice to recall to our readers the history and objects of the corporation:—

"The first festival was held in St. Paul's Cathedral in the year 1655, when certain zealous members of the Church, moved with compassion for the helplessness and privations of the clergy, suffering under the calamities of those times, formed themselves into an association to alleviate their distress. This private association was soon followed by the establishment of a public body, incorporated by Royal Charter from Charles II., and which, from the circumstance that the first promoters of the festival were all sons of clergymen became commonly known as the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy. It is especially desired to raise the amount of the pensions to the widows and aged single daughters of deceased clergymen, of whom there are 712 receiving from £15 to £25 per annum; and the Governors feel confident there must be many wealthy and benevolent individuals who would be happy to assist in so just and good an object, did they know the extent of the pecuniary distress, and consequent suffering and privations into which a large number of excellent ladies are thrown by the death of husbands and fathers, whose life incomes as clergymen afforded no means of laying by a provision for their widows and orphans."

No effort being spared to render this annual festival worthy of the object in view, it holds a foremost place among celebrations of the kind, and rarely fails to create an amount of public interest sufficient to bring to our metropolitan Cathedral a congregation numerically inferior only to that which assembles annually at the meeting of the Charity Schools. A large part of this is due to the remarkable efficiency of the musical part of the service, in the performance of which the regular choir of St. Paul's is strengthened by the co-operation of the choirs of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey, together with considerable reinforcements from other sources. The proceedings on the occasion of the present anniversary differed in no material respect from those of former celebrations. There was the usual civic procession, which entered by the great west door, and, joined by the dignitaries of the Church, proceeded up the nave, headed by the members of the united choirs in long array. Next to the Cathedral clergy came the Festival Committee, the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex, the aldermen, and, finally, the Lord Mayor of London, accompanied by the dignitaries before named.

The musical part of the service, as always, was directed by that zealous and indefatigable teacher, Mr. Henry Buckland, conductor of the choir at the Special Services under the dome, and of the 5,000 singing children at the annual meeting of the Charity Schools; Mr. Goss, organist of St. Paul's, and Mr. G. Cooper, deputy organist (also organist at St. Sepulchre's), presiding at the noble instrument built by Messrs. Hill, which has for some years been a musical, though, for lack of a case, hardly an architectural ornament of the church. Tallis's evergreen music to the "Suffrages" was given with the accustomed effect by the members of the combined choirs (about 200 strong), its grand and simple harmonies resounding through the building with a solemnity which seems to be its exclusive property. The long Psalm for the day (the 78th) was sung to a quadruple chant in F, the composition of Mr. Herbert Oakeley (Edinburgh professor of music), which last year created so favorable an impression. Without wishing to depreciate the composition of Professor Oakeley, excellent in its kind, we cannot but express a hope that the form of the quadruple chant will never gain an absolute footing in the choral services at our great cathedrals. The "Magnificat" and "Nunc dimittis" were from Walsley's service in D. These were good; but far better was the anthem, "O give thanks unto the Lord" (Psalm 106 and 118), by Mr. Goss, a composer of whose Church music his country has solid reason to be proud. This

anthem is in every sense a master-piece, and we hope to hear it as often as possible—until, indeed, its gifted author feels moved to produce another, to take its place. A happier blending of the free and rich coloring of the modern style with the conventional forms to which many insist Church music ought strictly to be prescribed, it would be hard to cite in any contemporary work of the kind. But of this felicitous combination of the two styles Mr. Goss has produced other examples. Mendelssohn's touching and beautiful anthem, "Hear my prayer" (Psalm 55), preceded the sermon. In this the solo part was taken by Master Henry, of the St. Paul's choir, a young gentleman with a very pleasing voice, who accomplished his task with a correctness and expression hardly to be looked for at his years. The choir in this anthem was thoroughly efficient, while the organ accompaniment was played in a masterly manner. Handel's magnificent "Worthy is the Lamb" (the last piece in "The Messiah") was the anthem which followed the sermon.

#### PARIS.

That "Romeo and Juliet" is the most fertile of subjects for operatic treatment history can show. There are more lyric settings of Shakespeare's play than even Voltaire's play, "Semiramide." And no wonder, since the one seems in reality moulded into libretto form, and wooing the musician to illustrate it by his art; while the other, though tempting by its oriental grandeur and barbaric magnificence, is feeble in plot and destitute of human interest. The first composer who set "Romeo and Juliet" to music was Benda, who wrote his opera in 1778. The second who wedded musical strains to Shakespeare's play was the famous Steibelt, who, on his arrival in Paris about the year 1790, was all the rage as a composer. M. de Segur had translated and adapted "Romeo and Juliet" into a libretto for the Grand Opera, and the composition of the music was entrusted to Steibelt. The opera, nevertheless, was repudiated by the directors of the Académie Royal de Musique et de Danse in 1792, and, in revenge, the authors turned the recitatives into spoken dialogue, and had the piece represented at the Theatre Feydeau in 1793. The chief result of Steibelt's Romeo was that it snuffed out Benda's Romeo. Then came the Romeo—or the "Romeo and Juliet"—or the "Romeo e Giulietta"—or the "Copuletti ed I Montecchi," for by these names was the opera variously called—of Zingarelli, which, being more dramatic and novel, and being acted better snuffed out Steibelt's opera; which, in its turn, was snuffed out by Vacca's Romeo; which, in its turn, was snuffed out by Bellini's Romeo, which in its turn, was not snuffed out by Hector Berlioz's Romeo, because the Frenchman's opera is no opera at all, nor intended for an opera, but is a species of dramatic oratorio, a singular combination of lyric drama and symphony. Now, whether M. Gounod's Romeo will ultimately snuff out all the Romeo's that have preceded it must be mere matter of guess work. The majority of French critics assert that the new Romeo will not only snuff out all other Romeos, but all M. Gounod's operas to boot, not ignoring "Faust" or "Mirella," to say nothing of snuffing out all other operas ever written. When I hear M. Gounod apostrophized as one of the sublimest musical geniuses the world has seen, and Madame Miolan-Carvalho eulogized in terms that could only properly be addressed to Patti or Rachel, I begin to think there must be a large amount of prejudice pervading the critical atmosphere, or judgment has altogether gone to the dogs. There is much diversity of opinion about M. Gounod's opera. Many contend that it does not come up to the mark of "Faust," "Mirella," or even "La Médicène Malgre lui." A few insist that it surpasses all that M. Gounod has written. For my own part I think there is much fine music in "Romeo e Juliette"—perhaps the finest the composer has written—and feel assured that it will have a great success at the Royal Italian Opera, more particularly if Mario and Adolina be the hero and heroine.